DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 330 022 EA 022 020

AUTHOR Krumm, Volker
TITLE Whose School Is It? Comments on a Deplorable State Almost Everybody Seems To Be Content With.
PUB DATE 89
NOTE 27p.; Lecture presented as part of a series for the anniversary of the refounding of the Paris-London University (25th, Salzburg, Austria).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Change Strategies; *Decentralization; Elementary Secondary Education; Federal Regulation; Foreign Countries; *Governance; Government School Relationship; Institutional Autonomy; Parent Participation; Parent Rights; *Parent Role; *Policy Formation; Politics of Education; Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS *Austria

ABSTRACT

Although Austrian schools legally belong to the state, the question of who has actual control remains controversial. Issues related to governance are discussed in this paper, which presents a historical overview of the development of educational policymakers' views on governance and the evolution of parents' rights, and an examination of teacher control as a reality. Models for change are discussed--those intrinsic to the system and those requiring changes in the system. A recommendation is made for a denationalized school system based on individual self-regulation to create partnerships among students, teachers, and parents and to dissolve the link among absolutism, educational financing, and nationalization. (LMI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED330022

WHOSE SCHOOL IS IT?

Volker Krumm
Salzburg

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

V. Krumm

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EA 022 020

Whose School is it?

Comments on a deplorable state almost everybody seems to be content with. 1)

The answer to the question sounds simple: The school belongs to the state. According to the legal definition of property, the state is the owner. Nobody but the state has the right, for example, to sell small schools or railway stations as it did so many years ago and as it will soon have to do with many schools as a result of the birth-rate slump caused by the pill.

The answer becomes more complicated, if we ask, who in fact holds the right of disposal who, legally speaking, owns it, who in fact exercises 'control'. Presumably, we first tend to think of the administration, maybe next the principals. And how about the teachers, the parents, the pupils?

Who among these people was or is in control of schools. Who should control it? I will be examining the following questions here:

1. How has the attitude of educational policy-makers developed and changed regarding the question of who should control the school?
2. Which value systems and systems of order were implemented, how has the legal position changed?
3. How has the school reality developed regarding this question? Who in fact DOES control the school?
4. Which models are being discussed to change the 'deplorable state' or what kind of change is being aimed at?

Among those who could conceivably be in control, I will not comment explicitly on the pupils. I will only talk about the parents, first of all, because parents' rights, past and present, are of particular interest to me due to a project I am currently working on and, secondly, because I consider, in a somewhat simplified manner, parents

---

1) Lecture within an interdisciplinary series of lectures on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the refounding of Paris-Lodron University, Salzburg.

EA 022 020

and pupils to be in the same boat: parents represent the pupils. With increasing maturity pupils take over their parents' place in the 'fight for school'. At the university level they are on their own. 2)

1. How has the attitude of educational policy-makers developed regarding the question of governmental influence on education?

For varied reasons to be dealt with later, the ruling monarchs in the last years of the Middle Ages increasingly aimed at establishing a strong centralized form of government in order to take direct or indirect control of virtually all institutions such as the school system (Fertig 1984, 221).

How did the attitude of educational philosophers develop regarding this matter?

At the beginning of the 17th century Wolfgang Ratke asked, "Do the schools belong to the regent?", and he answered, "Yes, they belong solely to him and to all those who hold as high an office because such a work is part of the general laws over which solely the high authority has the power to which no private persons are entitled, since they lack the power that can granted only by God and therefore can not be given the responsibility for such an important work" (Fertig 1984, 220). The humanists had already "called for the inclusion of the school system into the welfare obligations of the ruling authority (Fertig 1984, 221). The enthusiasm for 'nationalization' was carried on by the Enlightenment until around the end of the 18th century when it was eventually put into practice.

In 1768 Basedow explained why the state and only the state should have the obligation of being in charge of and watching over the school

---

2) I am well aware that pupils and parents often are not in the same boat with teachers. That's the reason why pupils' rights are distinguished from parental rights (compare Nevermann/Richter 1977). For the questions discussed here, however, an equivalent treatment seems to be acceptable.

system (cited in Fertig, 229), and the holder of the first chair of pedagogy in Germany, Trapp, wrote in 1780: "To some degree no one has more interest in having good schools than the state ... to some degree no one else has the good will (to promote good schools), to some degree no one else has the insight and the resources (to do so)" (Jenkner 1985, 334). 3)

The philosophers of the Enlightenment were convinced, that humanity could be guided out of its mental immaturity. It could not be expected of the family to pull itself out of ignorance through its own abilities. They believed to have manifold proof that the church had no interest in enlightenment and general education, and they did not have confidence in the communities to finance a system of general compulsory education - thus they placed their hopes in the enlightened monarchs.

The more the general compulsory education and state-supervision, which they had promoted, gained ground, the more 'liberal' the followers of the Enlightenment became. Many became skeptics or opponents of a strong state.

They had discovered, that the monarchs also had no interest in general education of the masses but rather in the training of quiet and useful subjects: pius, loyal, industrious, but not too enlightened or interested in rising above their god-given social status, let alone having the ability to do so.

In 1792 young Wilhelm von Humboldt wrote: "Every form of public education provides man with a certain civic shape ... for the spirit of the government always dominates it". As long as the

---

3) Some of the following quotations are translated extracts from the informative work by S. Jenkner "Staatsschule-Gemeindeschule-Schulgemeinde - Die Staats- und Erziehungswissenschaftliche Diskussion zum Verhältnis von Schule und Staat im 19. Jahrhundert.", 1985, pp. 333-347. In his essay, Jenkner points out that "the contemporary critical discussion in Germany ... (is) accompanied by reflection on the 19th century, when the foundation of our educational constitution was laid".

subject obeys the law and keeps himself and his family in a state of well-being and is not involved in some harmful business, the state will not care about the exact nature of his existence. Here public education, which does not have the human being in mind, but rather the citizen and subject, sought an equlibrium of all, which only brings about and maintains a status of calm, which these states aim at most urgently" (cited in Müller 1981, 74). When Humboldt took over ministerial powers, his opinion naturally changed.

And Trapp bemoans his former confidence in the state: "All institutions maintained by power, which do not aim at the preservation and extension of this power and its administrators', must drop their original goals and the public school should, rather than promote reason, suffocate it in its state of germination" - a distrust he explicity extended to all political systems, even democratic ones (Müller 1971, 74 and Jenkner 1985, 337).

Campe believed in 1793, that wherever "privileged or monopolized school and educational institutions enforced by the state exist, invincible obstacles lie in the way of progressive improvement of the school and educational system" (Jenkner 1985, 337).

If I am not mistaken, the branch of liberal critics of the state until today remained the main group among the opponents to a strong centralized state school system 4). Their adversaries were, for

---

4) Further substantiation of Jenkner's assertion where modifications of liberal thinking are evident. See Gall 1987, Hamann 1986, 86ff and above all the sources of Berg 1980.

Here is another voice: "That the whole or any large part of the education of the people should be in State hands, I go as far as any one in deprecating. All that has been said of the importance of individuality of character, and diversity in opinions and modes of conduct, involves, as of the same unspeakable importance, diversity of education. A general State education is a mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another: and as the mould in which it casts them is that which pleases the predominant power in the government, whether this be a monarch, a priesthood, an aristocracy or the majority of the existing generation; in proportion as it is efficient and successful, it establishes a despotism over the mind, leading by natural tendency to one over the body. An education

established and controlled by the State should only exist, if it exist at all, as one among many competing experiments, carried on for the purpose of example and stimulus, to keep the others up to a certain standard of excellence." And as if he were describing current-day conditions in Austria he states in another section, "Every function superadded to those already exercised by the government causes its influence over hopes and fears to be more widely diffused, and converts, more and more the active and ambitious part of the public into hangers-on of the government, or of some party which aims at becoming the government." (John, St. Mill 1974, 161 and 165).

---

different reasons, all conservative or national-liberal forces, socialists of every kind and ... the teachers. Being greatly outnumbered, they never had any chance of succeeding. With the support of these forces the state increasingly established state schools in the 19th century (Berg 1972, Leschinsky/Roeder 1983), so that nowadays in Austria and Germany it indisputably may call almost all schools its own. I want to comment only briefly here on the interests of the teachers in a state-run school system, in de-privatization and in state school-supervision.

Even the enlightened monarchs made use of the "old authorities" to control the federal school system, for example, the landed nobility (Landadel) or landlords, the townspeople or magistrates and above all the church (Leschinsky/Roeder 1983). The clergy was the immediate superior of the majority of primary school teachers until far into the 19th century. The teachers wanted to rid themselves of this type of supervision and to become 'reichs-unmittelbar', meaning directly subject to the state. In the old enlightenened tradition they expected the (progressive) state to improve their miserable financial situation and to take measures towards a standard national school and thus towards an improvement in the education of the masses. Only a few, such as Wander and Diesterweg, realized that not only autonomy from the church was to be aimed at but also from the state - it is well known that they were suspended from their posts (Heinemann 1977). The largely futile battle of liberal thinkers

against the idea of school as a "matter of the state" (as it was called in the 'pioneering' general law for the Prussian states of 1794) 5) found only direct or indirect support among other outsiders.

The Social Democrats demanded "general and equal education by the state" in their Gothaer Program of 1875. Karl Marx was bitterly opposed to that idea: " Popular education by the state is totally reprehensible. To determine by a general law the funding of elementary schools, the qualification of the teaching personnel, the subject areas etc. and, as is being done in the United States, to enforce the execution of these laws, is not the same thing as declaring the state as popular educator. Both government and church are to be equally excluded from (exerting) any kind of influence on the school ..." (Fertig 1984, 238f).

The Catholic minority in Prussia tried to reduce the influence of the (Protestant) state and to keep it at a low level - in their favor, of course. In fact, they were as badly suppressed in the 'Kulturkampf' (Cultural Struggle) as the Socialists by the 'Sozialistengesetze' (Socialist Laws).

I announced that I want to give special consideration to the role of the parents. So far they have not been mentioned, and that is no accident. During the time period being discussed they had, with very few exceptions, no say and no advocates. I would like to mention one exception: Dörpfeld.

In 1863 he wrote: "Concerning the traditional question: is the state or the church the legitimate owner of school, we shall reply: the choice is incorrect, there is a third option: the school-

---

5) The Prussian school system was of great interest to Empress Maria Theresia: In January 1774 she addressed Friedrich II of Prussia with the wish, to send his subject J. I. Felbinger to Vienna for some time, to ask his advice "in different subjects concerning the school system". So the "Protestant-Prussian models of the European elementary school system were partially the force behind the reform of the Austrian elementary school system - (even though Felbinger deliberately tried to undermine it)" (Engelbrecht 1984, 102).

community which is an amalgamation of families of the same religious confession with mutual concern for the education of their children".

Also the choice between state or community is incorrect. The third option is the union of school-communities. The notion, that public affairs, such as the school, can only be reliably managed by the paternal wisdom of experts, just doesn't hold water. It is a matter of self-administration (Dörpfeld 1863, 371).

These ideas were taken up again only by educational reformers and, recently, by 'alternative educators'. In the 20th century there is not so much a dispute concerning which rights parents should have in school, but rather how to develop an educational system simliar to the family structure or from the perspective of the child. The issue of parent participation in the school is a 'political' question. This takes me to my second question.

2. Which value system or system of order was put into practice, how has the legal position changed?

In Hamann's "History of School" (1986) we can find 61 references in the index to the word 'state', 66 to 'teachers' but only 5 to 'parents'. The first reference to parents can be found on page 156 (out of 231 pages). There the school-concepts of the twenties are discussed.

That is characteristic. Until after World War I parents had no rights, only duties: the duty to have their children educated, to pay tuition, to make sure their children had everything they needed for school, and that they behaved properly ...

The first right, namely to be able to remove one's children from religion classes, was granted to German parents by the socialist-led Cultural Administration (Dietze 1977, 144). The protest of the Catholic Church is astonishing if we consider, how strongly it had

tried - especially during the 'Kulturkampf' - along with the 'natural right of the parents', to claim the right to exercise influence on the structuring of the school. 6)

Two assertions stood opposed to each other: "Governmental right of education exceeds parental right" and "parental right exceeds governmental right". The conflict between Social Democrats and Centrists ended in the "Weimar School Compromise", a compromise which stated among other things, that parents or guardians could petition for the establishment of elementary schools of their religious confession. So "two strategies had found their way: first of all, a technique for compromise (parents' will) replacing political decision-making and, secondly, the establishment of parental rights, not only concerning family-based education but also decisions on questions concerning the structure of the school-system" (Nevermann 1983, 180). Both had not existed before.

In detail, the German provinces distinguished themselves from each other considerably. As is the case today, there was a north-south slope. The "initial reluctant co-operation between parents and school was extended to the common election of the headmasters in the North" (Dietze 1977, 144).

After World War II the parents' legal sphere of influence was extended. They were increasingly granted rights WITHIN the school. The right to demand the establishment of confessional schools, was not granted anymore. For further information about the Federal Republic of Germany see Dietze 1982 & 1983.

And what rights do Austrian parents have in the school today?

Legislators assume - as in Germany - that the education of the youth is up to the parents in the first place. The school has only to

---

6) Maybe the church acknowledges a 'natural right of parents' solely towards the state, not, however, towards itself.

'contribute' to the education of the pupils (explanatory comments on Paragraph 47 SchUG in the RV 345 BlgNR 13. GP). "A profitable education of the youth can only be brought about by collaboration" of parents and school."

These far-reaching principles, however, are substantially limited by the following text, "According to the spirit of these principles the framework concedes a prerogative of the school only in regard to at school itself." (ibid.) In other words, WITHIN the school parents do not have much say. What rights do they have in fact?

They have the right to information (Paragraph 19 SchUG), they have the right of decision-making, the right of consultation, or as it says in a brochure on the occasion of the fourth amendment of School-Law in 1986:

"For the first time (!) parental rights are established in the School Law: namely the right of

* hearing
* submission of suggestions and statements
* representation of pupils not yet entitled to manage their own affairs
* representation of interests to the teachers, the principal, the educational authorities by means of the parent-representatives." (BMUKS, p. 12)

Isn't it wonderful how far parents have come, that before the end of the century they have managed to secure the rights of hearing and of making suggestions?

But you may be even more surprised to read, which rights of participation parents have in 1986, 65 years after the founding of the Republic:

a) They have the right to participate in the decision about the treatment and costs of ski-courses, week-long excursions in the country and so on - about 'the kind of activity and costs', "not,

however, if they are to take place at all".

b) They have the right to participate in the decision, whether an event is to be declared "school-related" (which would grant insurance coverage). The decision can only be made once teachers have volunteered as supervisors and financing has been secured.

c) They have the right to participate in the decision, whether the ministerial building regulations should include further paragraphs such as: "use of slippers in the class-rooms, keeping clothes in an central wardrobe, staying in the hall during the breaks and related subjects."

d) I find it particularly progressive, that they are allowed to decide in joint committees on the authorization of two fund-raising collections per year among the pupils (the educational authorities may, independent of the parents, authorize two multi-school collections).

Other rights include the right to decide on the organization of extra-curricular activities, of career guidance and of school health care - note that the rights are limited to 'organization', they do not include the right to approve or initiate action (BMUKS 30ff).

Please don't think that's all: Parents today are allowed to advise teachers or school leaders on:

* important questions concerning instruction and education,
* questions concerning the planning of school events,
* when and how to run parent consultation days,
* the choice of teaching aides "such as utensils for art or additional reading material in English",
* buildings in the area of the school. (ibid., 35ff)

Last but not least, I would like to point out a further change in favor of the parents. The Ministry writes: "These rights assure, that parents can not be regarded as strangers in school". They were regarded as such until this "clarification" was made in 1986. 7) (ibid., 28)

---

7) The counseling center of a provincial school board was not able to tell me which parents' rights can be derived from this.

A further passage in reference to this point: "Of course (!), these

rights do not imply, that parents are entitled to enter a class-room at any time or that conferences with a teacher or the principal can be held without an appointment."

At first sight this appears natural, but this naturalness, too, is a result of habit. Why should parents, for instance, not be entitled to enter a class-room at any time? You can just hear school administrators and teachers crying: "Disturbance!". Of course it would cause a disturbance in the beginning but three days later the children would not care anymore; and once the parents have seen that everything is fine and how difficult good teaching is, they will rarely sit in on classes. In the USA children are so used to parents visiting their classes, that they do not even bat an eye, when a strange person enters through the usually open classroom door.

The indicated legal situation can be interpreted in light of different ideal conceptions of democracy. I will not attempt to do so but rather only briefly relate them to other legal situations:

Compared to the lack of rights of the parents before World War I (concerning the possibility of exercising direct influence in internal school affairs), Austrian parents have made some progress. Measured by the excitement of the teachers to these changes, it even seems to be quite a bit of progress.

Compared to other countries and to private schools, their influence is lacking. In some Swiss cantons and in some states in the US, parents take part in decisions regarding hiring and firing of teachers, principals and school superintendents. In Hamburg they can participate in the lessons. In private-schools and alternative models they form a school community along with teachers and pupils (as Dörpfeld would have wished). (Compare, for example, Schleicher 1972, Keck 1979, Melzer 1985).

The development until today and the comparison with other states show **that**, and to some degree **how much** values have changed. Certainly they will keep on changing. Naturally political battles will determine the direction of change.

The legal situation only allows a **tentative** answer to the question "Whose school is it?" or, according to the School Law, "To whom should it belong?". It does not allow a **conclusive** answer, since

the actual power structure can diverge considerably from the legal position. For that reason, I will save my answer until after the treatment of my third question, to which I now come.

3. How has the school reality developed regarding my question? Who actually does control the school?

In the sources of school history (Giese 1961) parents are mentioned for the first time in the context of a framework of teaching-laws by SÜvern in 1819. In Paragraph 56 of this model, teachers are expected "tc be kind and understanding during their contact with the parents of their pupils. The commentary to Paragraph 63 (SchUG) reads: "... the consultation shall not be one-sided from teacher to parent ...".

Why are such demands found in the law books? They only become understandable if we suggest, that the teachers are not 'kind and understanding' in their treatment of parents and that the consultation is too often one-sided.

The facts suggest, indeed, that the "close and real collaboration" or "equal relationship" demanded in the clarification of the school-laws have not been put into practice sufficiently.

In a study of parents in Salzburg, which I carried out in collaboration with colleagues and students (Krumm et al. 1987) at least half of all parents polled tended toward the following opinions:

* The practice of collaboration is unsatisfactory
* If parents have problems in education, they do not ask the teacher for advice
* Parents do not dare tell the teachers, what they think of their teaching
* Teachers do not like to be advised by parents
* Teachers would get along better with many pupils if they had close contact with the parents
* The teachers expect to get support from parents if they have problems with the children
* Parents have no influence on decisive school issues

* Parents abstain from legal rights because of fear

* Teachers usually do not concern themselves about making parents feel at home in school

I do not want to hide the fact that also more positive opinions exist. All in all, however, it becomes clear, that the will of legislators for trusting, loving collaboration is far from reality. Further characteristics are:

Parents fear the teachers to a considerable extent. Until recently they were not only regarded as strangers in school, they also felt that way. They often feel inferior to the teacher also because the meeting place is the school which is not their, but rather the teacher's domain. It is they who have to go to see the teacher, not the teacher who has to go to see them. It is they who must wait their turn to see the teacher and not vice versa etc., etc., etc. (Keck 1979).

The following remark in a writing of the Ministry mentioned above casts a characteristic light on the school reality. The question is asked: what effects do the new regulations have, among other things, on the teachers. The answer is: "They can relieve them. The participation of the parents ... should lead to productive discussions, should involve the parents through sharing responsibility, and finding mutual solutions to problems ... The parents can hardly expect teachers to cope with the problems and difficulties of their classes on their own." (BMUKS, 13) 8)

---

8) On page 36 we find the following example: "In the third grade of an elementary school, parents find that the same three troublemakers always create disturbances and terrorize their classmates. The parents of the three in question are not present. The class forum decides, that the parent-representative is to get in contact with the parents of the three pupils. He will encourage them to exert influence on their children, to stop their disturbing behaviour. The teacher is asked to separate the three with the 'backing' of the class forum.

Where or how did the parents find out about about the situation? Where, whom and how did the three trouble-makers terrorize? What

has the teacher done so far? Why does he welcome the 'backing' so much? What did parents and the teachers do before parents were granted the right in such cases to consultation on "important educational questions"?
themselves to the view of school held by the teachers. Rebellious parents are the exception, not the rule (Kob 1963, Eigler/Krumm 1979, Thommen 1985).

In other words: Once the teachers have given their best shot in trying to deal with difficulties and are no longer able to cope, the parents are immediately included in sharing the responsibility.

The insinuation that parents put the blame for the problems of their children in school largely on the school is wrong. The literature proves that the opposite is the case. Once problems occur, teachers tend to hold parents and pupils responsible rather than themselves. And the parents accept that. They have largely adapted.

The indicated lack of influence of the parents on the school and on school issues and the indicated weaknesses of the required collaboration between parents and teachers make up the condition which I denote as the "deplorable state" in my subtitle. "Almost everybody is content" with this deplorable state in one certain aspect. If we examine the attitude of parents towards school and towards the teachers in general, they show far-reaching satisfaction (Kob 1963, Bussigel et al. 1977, AFS-Poll 1981, Krumm et al. 1987).

The majority of parents rarely wanted and rarely wants today any sort of reform of the educational system. In the 250 years of compulsory school attendance and wide-spread powerlessness they have learned to submit themselves to the ideas of the 'school owners' and even to adopt them.

And now back to the introductory question: 'Whose school is it?'. I think you know my answer by now: The school belongs to the teachers.

Teachers have struggled for governmental schools, for their status as civil-servants and for relative autonomy. They have succeeded

in this struggle, to some degree even against their strongest adversary, the official school supervisory board, which nowadays modestly considers itself a "counseling supervisory board". Once teachers close the door of the classroom behind their backs - and they do this in Austria as well as in Germany - then they are in their domain and enjoy practically the same powers as those enlightened monarchs, who introduced compulsory school-education 200 years ago.

A well-renowned book dealing with this rise to power is called 'The Teachers' Odyssee" (Bunghardt 1965). The title hits the nail on the head: after he survives all perils, navigates around all dangers and finally slays all adversaries, Odysseus peacefully rules his small island.

Is my answer correct?

Subsequent to Max Weber's analysis of bureaucratic rule, Detlev A. Müller states, regarding the academically educated majority of teachers in the early 19th century: "They want to be the masters, not the servants of the community i.e. the school. However, as masters of the school, they can only become servants of the state. "The school becomes a state within the state in which teachers demand the obedience of the pupils which they themselves must give within the hierarchy of civil servants. The teachers consider the pupils to be comparable "in a certain sense to a civil servant". The teachers become the government, the headmaster becomes the monarch".

He writes further: The phenomenon of the "bureaucratic vicious circle" which M. Crozier brings out in his work "Le phenomene bureaucratique" determined the development of the school system in the 19th century. The growing dependency on the school bureaucracy is exploited by certain groups "to improve their position in the

struggle for power within the organization. This leads to renewed pressure towards aloofness and centralization, the sole solution to the problem of personal privileges". "Such a pattern of interpretation ... is based on the discovery, that human agents are actively inclined to gain advantage by all means and under all circumstances to increase their own privileges" (Müller 1981, 76 and 78).

I think there is reason to believe that this is still the case today. The statement from 1834 that Müller quotes, "The whole house is fettered in chains, when the parents show concern for the child's progress in school" coincides with the statement of the mother of a high-school pupil in Salzburg, "I have a hostage in school".

Lutz Dietze concludes in an extensive report: "In the gradually opening framework of the school system, teachers have an internal monopoly on planning, development, treatment, evaluation and revision of curricula. They decide alone or almost exclusively on grades, rights and punishment. There are no consequences to be paid if they are not able to prove competence when having their performance evaluated. For conferences and events teachers do not need any governmental subsidies due to the backing they enjoy by the financial resources of their organization. Besides that, their participation in conferences and further education is paid service. Only for them, not for pupils and parents, are institutions of further education institutionalized. They preferably benefit from the shelter of the school supervisory board and the administration. On top of that they are the main force in developmental planning on curricular questions: typically the educational commission consults the teachers, not, however, parents and pupils, before making decisions on recommendations.

Despite extremely little knowledge of the law they are the administrators and interpreters of regulations ...; ... the regular,

even everyday contact with each other allows the teachers better control over their representatives than is possible for parents and pupils (Dietze 1976, 344f).

All this brings Dietze to the assertion, that nowadays we have a 'teacher-teacher-teacher' school instead of the necessary 'pupil-parent-teacher' school. (ibid.) 9)

To summarize: In my discipline there is quite a bit of unity about the fact that - carefully stated - the parent-teacher relationship does not look too promising. Less agreement might exist on the question concerning the reasons for this and correspondingly the suggestions vary, as to how the 'deplorable state' can be repaired. So now I come to my last point:

4. What is being discussed to change the 'deplorable state' or what kind of change is being aimed at?

---

9) Dietze finishes his report as follows: "Still the step from a schooling institution towards a teacher-school has to gain approval. For the moment it means a loss of control of state under the rule of law. At the same time, however, it arouses new wishes of exerting influence on behalf of those affected. Increased rights of teachers may perhaps lead to escalations and wrong developments. These, however, have to be compared to the enormous number of wrong decisions that have marked the school system so far. The shift of competence from school administration to the school civic closeness which brings about a shortening of the odds. This applies even more so, if teachers realize after a period of getting used to the idea, that they must approve of strong pupil and parent rights for the sake of greater fulfillment of their pedagogical obligations because the understanding of parents and pupils is not inferior (though legally undervalued), but solely 'different' (Dietze 1976, 346).

For these reasons Dietze dedicates his essay to 27 (!) teachers' associations, which take up more than half a printed page to list. A resolution published by an Upper-Austrian teachers' association (titled "Let the Schools work in Peace") shows, how far away teachers are from the habituation period that Dietze had hoped for. It states, "There are very few professions, where lay people believe to such an extent to have a say...", "No democratic forced glee (school- and class-forum)", "The teacher must again be allowed to intervene in educational affairs ...", "We, the teachers, need some self-assured degree of decision making (power)", "We need some degree of responsibility and not partial pedagogical interdiction", "We need confidence in the work of more than 13,000 well-trained teachers", "We do not need to be paternally led by the hand ... through decreed 'school partnerships'".

The desirable state is formulated in different ways. If I am not mistaken, the goals are generally congruent: 'a good relationship between parents and teachers', 'partnership', 'school-community', 'fearless, 'non-authoritarian contact with each other', 'real cooperation', 'real collaboration in solving mutual concerns' and so on.

Larger discrepancies, however, become apparent regarding the question HOW the desired condition can be brought about. Finally, I briefly want to hint at the most important suggestions or value changes. To do so, I distinguish between

1. suggestions intrinsic to the system
2. suggestions requiring a change in the system

1. Suggestions intrinsic to the system comprise appeals to parents and teachers to finally take partnership and cooperation seriously. A large number of measures are suggested, such as a change in the form and time of meetings, measures for efficient managing of parents' evenings, of consultation hours, of written or telephoned communication; how to dismantle mutual prejudices is being examined, how to increase confidence, how to support contact without fear, how to involve parents in curricular and extra-curricular work. Teachers and parents are to be informed and trained separately or together in how to interact and cooperate better.

School service centers and arbitration centers are to be established. Announcements of the Ministry of Education too, as quoted, shall become part of the measures increasing mutual trust and, last but not least, the demand for an extension of the right of parent-participation (compare, for example, Keck 1979, Achermann 1979).

In times of peace such suggestions intrinsic to the system will do.

But is there peace? Provided there is - what kind of peace is in the current monopolized school-state?

2. For some (few) representatives of my discipline the answer to such questions leads to suggestions requiring a change in system. To understand these suggestions better, it seems necessary to me, to go into the justification of today's national school system.

The absolutist monarchs enforced compulsory school attendance and total state control not for pedagogical or philanthropic reasons but because of self-centered motives. The democratic state requires a new justification which concisely reads: A centralized compulsory school system run from above is a matter of necessity, to ensure

1. that the inequality between citizens will not be widened but diminished,
2. that the consensus in society on common values, language and so on will not be endangered,
3. that society will be sufficiently supplied with the qualifications necessary for its own survival, in other words, that enough is being learned (Lith 1985).

These reasons demand that our society, which is oriented towards the principle that individual freedom may only be restricted if it can be proven that the freedom of others or the basic order itself is jeopardized..., these reasons required therefore in our freely constituted society that an " island of absolutism" be maintained: **the school system** (Anschütz cited in Lith 1985, 1).

The belief in these reasons and thus in the glorified national school system is so wide-spread in my union that even among the alternative educators there are few heretics who doubt the reasons of justification (Illich, 1972).

Only sociologists in the English-speaking world have examined theoretically and empirically, whether these reasons are justifiable.

Their results are - I admit, even to my surprise, for I have been socialized into the right belief - unambiguous: The reasons are wrong (Lith 1985, 18-95).

Presumably, each of us would hold, that nobody, not even the state is entitled to stipulate, what to buy, where to do one's shopping, where to live, where to travel, whom to marry, where to work ... these liberties all had to be won from various authorities. So everyone should be pleased to hear, that results prove, that a further bastion of traditional state patronization has begun to totter.

And how about the alternatives critics suggest? They are actually quite familiar: the suggestions amount to orienting the conception of the school system by the principle mentioned above, by which the majority of areas of our society are oriented: by the idea of freedom or self-regulation of individuals. The role of the state is limited to making sure that this principle remains in force and is not being misused at the cost of others.

To conclude, I can only sketch general structural characteristics of a liberally drawn school system:

I begin with a sketch of general structural characteristics of the liberally constituted school system (Fig. 1).

[Place Fig. 1 here]

Figure 1 reminds us that the state plans, creates, maintains, administers 'its' school system and, by state school supervisors, controls it. The teachers are public servants who are virtually immune

to dismissal. They have won, as pointed out, great autonomy and are impervious to attack even from the school supervisory board. Further relevant characteristics are: Compulsory school system and the system of justification largely endorsed by the state; the system is relatively undifferentiated, hardly flexible, it is purely political and thus only 'reformable' from above. It is financed on the supply side by the state and by means of compulsory taxation of all tax-payers.

What essentially matters to me, is the characteristic, that parents or pupils have no significant influence: in cases of conflict with teachers, parents run into a brick wall.

The decisive component of this system is marked by the following quotation by Lith: "Financing education is a useful instrument of social steering to the extent of outright indoctrination and can only be exceeded by the (additional) method of nationalization. Absolutism, financing education as well as nationalization of the educational system logically belong together" (Lith 1985, 186). 10)

[Place Fig. 2 here]

---

10) In her report on the 'Occupation of the School' by the state in the 19th century, Christa Berg comes to the conclusion that, "... school policy is to be understood as policy by means of the school. Not pedagogical reasons but motives of interest and power politics passed off as reform cause or prevent changes in the area of schooling" (Berg, 1973, 185).

Parents can choose a school for their children among a variety of state and private schools and make an educational contract. Financing is carried out on their part, in other words on the demand level from their own funds, loans or educational certificates, that the parents receive from the state. The schools compete for pupils and are thus differently and flexibly oriented by the interest of the demanders. The system of 'justification' is de-nationalized and on the demand level; i.e. not the 'delivering' school but the 'receiving' authority decides on justification. The state- as in other areas - lays down minimal standards, which permit great variation in the schools. The state helps to enforce them and to pass on information and cares for - again as in other areas - children who are neglected by their parents.

"Here, reforms no longer depend on political majorities or on whether I assert myself or others. Only minorities still have to be convinced" (Blankertz, 1986, 256f).

Analogous to Lith's statement are the decisive marks of these "inverted" systems: The freely negotiated education-contract between partners, the financing from the level of demand and de-nationalization.

In other countries such models or variations of them are being discussed and tested (Lith, 1985, 212). Strangley, in the Austrian and German criticism of schools they are unknown. Here, criticism is limited to defects intrinsic to the system and to problems with co-determination (compare Hintz, 1984). What one fails to see is the most significant aspect of the previous considerations: that the pedagogically desirable 'school community', the real partnership between pupils, parents and teachers, is strongly obstructed by the traditional system, if not completely prevented by it.

A de-nationalized free school system, Stefan Blankertz writes (1986, 271), "would put an end to the scandalous situation, where one group of people - educational policy-makers and teachers - in fact strongly

influences and governs the lives of practically all citizens, without having to depend the least bit on the consent of the people affected." "...as a result, education would be free from the grip of politicization". 11)

Educational policy-makers and teachers who pretend to be oriented towards promoting the maturity of the children and youths entrusted to them (that is at least what they committed themselves to do when they wrote the curricula), and who pretend to regard the parents of their pupils as mature individuals and as 'equal partners', would have to approve of my proposal. Otherwise, they give the impression that they wish to maintain the existing deplorable state in their favor for another two hundred years.

---

11) From the Austrian view it is remarkable, that the radical - solely American - criticism of the traditional state school system is oriented towards the 'Austrian school of economic theory (Menger, Böhm-Bawerk, Mises, Hayek) and thus towards the main idea of an 'open society' (Blankertz 1986) - as we do in the constitutions of many social areas, except in the areas of school and the army.

I have repeatedly asked pupils, whether they have ever heard any of the names mentioned above. They have not heard of any, not even of Böhm-Bawerk, whose features grace the Austrian hundred Schilling bank note. Is this ignorance an indicator of the spreading of liberal thinking in Austria?

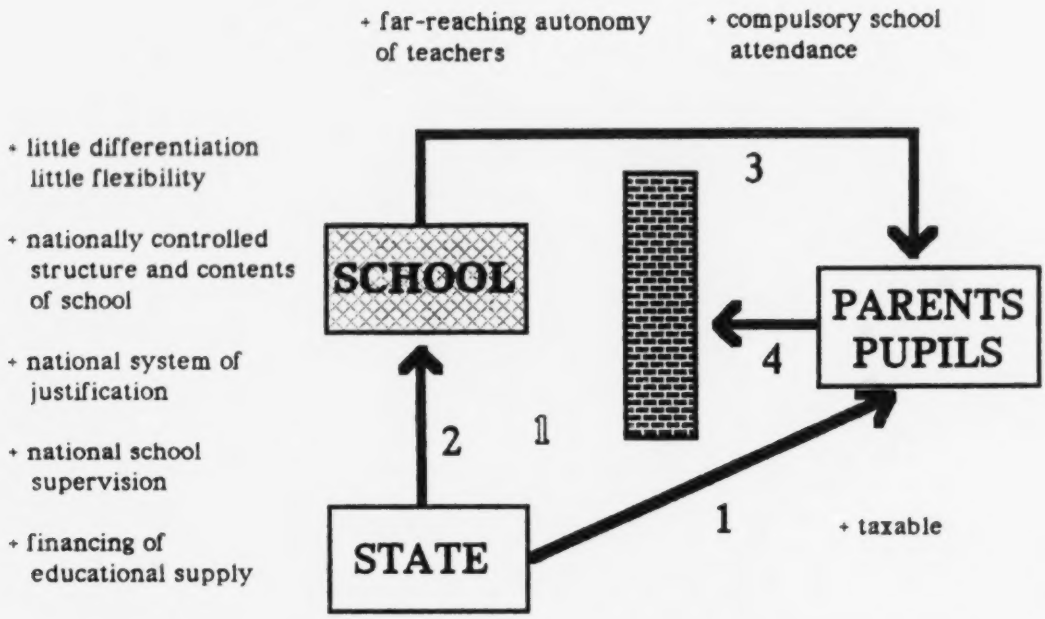

Fig.1: Structural chracteristics of the common national school system

The arrows mark the most important characteristics.

(1) The state finances schools by means of compulsory taxes of the population.
(2) It has the control
(3) and forces pupils to attend school.
(4) The parents have only minimal rights to participate in decisions and in control.

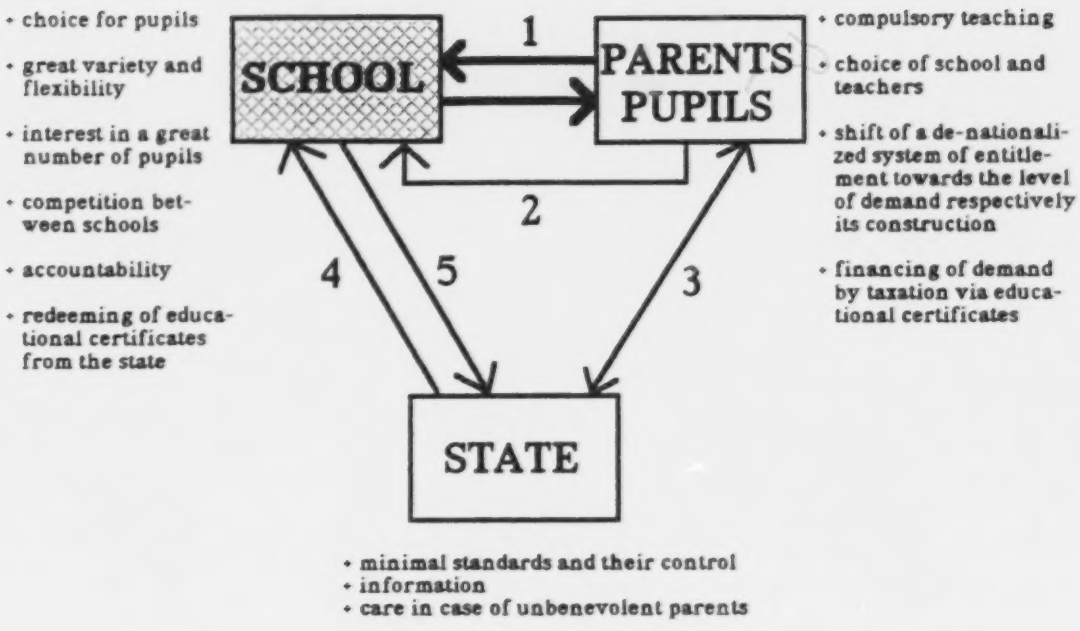
• choice for pupils
• great variety and flexibility
• interest in a great number of pupils
• competition between schools
• accountability
• redeeming of educational certificates from the state
SCHOOL
1
PARENTS PUPILS
• compulsory teaching
• choice of school and teachers
• shift of a de-nationalized system of entitlement towards the level of demand respectively its construction
• financing of demand by taxation via educational certificates
2
4
5
3
STATE
• minimal standards and their control
• information
• care in case of unbenevolent parents

Fig.2: Structural characteristics of a free (de-nationalized) school system

The arrows mark the most important characteristics:

(1) In the center we have the free education-contract between parents (pupils) and school
(2) School is being financed directly by the parents
(3) through taxation (educational certificates).
(4) The state lays down minimal standards and checks adherence to them.
(5) The school cashes in the educational certificates from the state.